



Iowa Department of Public Health
Promoting and Protecting the Health of Iowans

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BLOOD LEAD TESTING REQUIRED BEFORE SCHOOL ENTRY

Do Iowa children need to have a blood lead test before they start kindergarten?

Yes, beginning in the fall of 2008, all Iowa children must have proof of a blood lead test before starting kindergarten, or as soon after that as the parents are notified that the child needs a test.



My child was already tested for lead poisoning at the age of 2 years. Is another test needed? Do I need to take a copy of my child's blood lead test to the school?



No, if the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has a record of the test, your child does not need another test. (Physicians and laboratories report all tests to IDPH.) IDPH will let you and the school know if they do not have a record of the test.

Will Medicaid, hawk-i, or private insurance cover the cost of a blood lead test?

Medicaid and *hawk-i* will both pay for a blood lead test. Many insurance plans also pay for this test. If you do not have a way to pay for this test, the Iowa Department of Public Health will have some funds to pay for it.



Is there a religious exemption for the blood lead testing requirement?



Yes, there is a religious exemption. There is a form that you must fill out and have notarized. You need to file this form with the school. The form will soon be available from the Iowa Department of Public Health, schools, and local health departments.

Will my child be kept out of school if they have not had a blood lead test?

Your child will not be kept out of school. However, childhood lead poisoning is a serious problem in Iowa. It causes learning disabilities and could affect your child's school performance, so we strongly recommend that your child be tested for lead poisoning.



OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING

How often should your child be tested for lead poisoning?

It's important to get their blood lead level tested at least once a year until they are six years old. Many children have normal blood lead levels at 6-12 months of age. However, these same children may become lead-poisoned when they are older and more active.

How do children become lead-poisoned?

Children become lead-poisoned if they:

- Put lead-based paint chips in their mouths.
- Put dusty or dirty hands, toys, bottles, or pacifiers in their mouths.
- Chew on surfaces painted with lead-based paint.
- Play in dirt or a sandbox near an old building or where an old building was torn down.
- Breathe in dust from lead-based paint that is being sanded, scraped, or removed with a heat gun.



Lead poisoning is usually caused by lead-based paint found in homes built before 1960. About 60% of the homes in Iowa, both in urban and rural areas, were built before 1960.

How common is lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning affects 1 in 14 Iowa children. This is four times the national average.

Could your child be lead-poisoned?

Yes — most children with lead poisoning do not look sick. Lead-poisoned children may:

- Be easily excited.
- Have problems paying attention.
- Complain of stomach aches and headaches.
- Be more tired than usual.



Lead-poisoned children may have learning problems when they start school. Children with very high lead levels may have severe brain damage or even die. The only way to tell if your child is lead-poisoned is to have their blood tested.

Where can I get more information?

For more information about lead poisoning and how you can protect your children, contact one of the following agencies:

Iowa Department of Public Health
1 (800) 972-2026
(515) 281-3479
or your local city or county
health department or housing agency